

## Upper Deschutes RMP Preferred Alternative Sub-committee Meeting Minutes

**April 20, 2004**

**9:00- 3:00**

**Location: Redmond Library**

**Present:**

Terry Morton, Facilitator

Katy Yoder

Barbara Pieper

Mari Gregory (Visitor, horse interest)

Jamie Hildebrandt

Sarah Thomas

Glen Ardt

Chris Egertson (p.m.)

Anne Holmquist

Kent Gill

Darrell Pieper

Clay Penhollow

Jerry Cordova

Joani Dufourd (a.m.)

Ed Faulkner

**BLM:** Bill Dean, Greg Currie, Robert Towne, Mollie Chaudet, Lisa Clark

### **Introduction**

(Terry Morton) **Question:** What were the impressions from last week?

**Comment:** Generally have the feeling that we would have to agree, so ultimately not able to really not able to say “no.” Gave some twos, but felt like there were times to “just agree.” Felt like we’d be here until we said yes. What’s the point about 2,3 → do we count it if there’s lower numbers?

**Consensus is a subjective process.**

Others felt like they were ok to say no, but with a valid argument. We wouldn’t quit, but we’d have to come back to it.

Question: What is the meaning of “no consensus” to BLM? *We made alterations based on group input. So we can change based on discussions here. We’re only presenting options. You can always say I can’t live with this. This is a community plan – we’re committed to this effort. And we’ve spent a lot of time bringing the results of the comments to you. We’ll get as close as we can as a group, and then hopefully the BLM will only be making a few decisions outside of the group.*

Question: What if we had a room of one’s? *Obviously we’d have to look at it. When we developed the Draft we didn’t have complete consensus. And if we don’t have consensus, after we run out of time, BLM will decide. We may add an extra meeting, but we’ll first try to get as much consensus as possible.*

**REVIEW: see review handout, #8 - Wildlife/Recreation Consensus Points.**

**Additional Note:** we also received comments regarding seasonal closures in Millican Plateau – Result: we may implement seasonal snow closures on a case-by-case basis for this area. We'll work with ODFW on developing a stipulation/guideline for an interagency process to consider whether or not to close Millican Plateau during severe weather conditions. Not a strict, automatic closure.

### **Continued from 4/15: North Millican OHV trail system**

**Current:** All OHV trails are closed Dec 1 – Apr 30 under litigation; approx 279 miles of roads and trails (includes West Butte Rd).

#### **Preferred Alternative:**

- Primary wildlife emphasis
- 70% HE
- 1,000 -2,000 acre unfragmented habitat patches
- open year round to OHV
- low trail density ( $\leq 1.5$  mi/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- trails are prioritized over roads

**Problems:** difficulty reaching 70% HE, and patch size – while maintaining an open OHV system. Would just end up with a couple of trails (See previous notes for HE description).

Comment: Used HE models to develop concepts (see previous notes) – have a concern that we're applying an elk model with no data specific to North Millican – and applying it to grouse, etc. *While we're not really using hard and fast numbers – confidence comes from applying a variety of tools (patches, closures, road densities, etc.) to add up to creating effective habitat.*

**Concept 4 with partial seasonal closure: achieved 57% HE with 49 miles of roads seasonally.**

#### **Proposed changes to discuss:**

Maintain primary wildlife emphasis

Modify guidelines:

- 50-60% HE
- patch size more variable, 1000 acre and some smaller in less effective habitats
- Seasonal closure of road/trail system to OHV use within areas or along portions of the trail system. Some open year round; portion seasonally closed.
- Avoid locating motorized trails w/in 2-4 miles of any active leks or w/in high value wintering habitat for deer/lek.
- Concentrate year round open trail areas in/near areas of lower value habitats
- ESTIMATE 40-80 total trail miles, 30-50 open for winter use.

ALSO – seasonal closure of OHV trail system in N Millican would also apply to bicycles

Equestrian use of area ltd to designated routes during seasonal closure (can't predict miles at this point/where exactly).

**Question:** Does this relate to litigation? *Not constrained by litigation. Litigation required an EIS to develop a new plan.* Will there be a reaction? Create another round of litigation? *Can't worry about it, just do the best analysis. Meet the intent of the court order.*

**Question:** Why limit bikes and not horses? *A recent study done in the Blue Mountains found that of 4 different recreational uses (OHV, mountain bike, horse, and hiking) equestrian use has some of the lowest amount of impact on wildlife (elk) but bikes have more toward OHV use level; possibly because they move faster, etc. Carrying forward current strategy of closed to motorized/mechanized. Hikers have an impact, but again, lower effect than motorized/mechanized.*

Is there an established system here? *Yes, fairly contained to South Millican, North Millican, Millican Plateau.* If there is a lot of restriction here, are we going to drive OHVs outside of the planning area and they'll develop more trails elsewhere? What if a grouse plops down in the middle of the OHV area? What will happen to recreation?

We're trying to find a balance and provide some winter use – and deal with wildlife. People may move – east? Cline Buttes? Preferred Alt won't be perfect for HE and recreation – but looking at balance. In order to really have a balance, though, maybe we need to say “this is where we're going with OHVs – not wildlife.” All resources can go one place, and not worry that it will be taken away.

We have some discretion now while sage grouse is sensitive, and we need to manage for it now and not contribute to the need to list. So we can't “sacrifice” an area – it would be contrary to National BLM policy. Once listed, if it happens, we lose a lot of flexibility.

Ultimately, we'd look at adaptive management. For recreation we'll invest in lesser quality sage grouse habitat so less likely that a sage grouse lek will set up there.

What changes in trail system would be necessary under the PA? Will we be impacting a trail system that has had a lot of investment? *Yes, but there's a lot of changes that will need to be made anyway to enhance user satisfaction, respond to west butte road, deal with user created roads. We'd be wiping the slate clean and provide something new. Stressing trails over roads, so a lot of change, but it's the cost of keeping winter/year round use.*

Right now about 279 miles of roads/trails – some 260 miles of DESIGNATED in North Millican, Millican Plateau, and South Millican → so, if North Millican has 279 miles then it has a lot more than designated → estimate about 181 designated trail miles. A certain road system will have to go out there (ROWs, etc.) – but any roads we absolutely don't need, we want to get rid of to favor trails.

Are we currently meeting the needs of OHV users? *No, because of seasonal closure and current trail design (need more technical rides as well – more hours, some less high speed). Is area big enough to design this? Yes, if connection to Millican Plateau maintained? And over time, probably no...users coming from all over.*

Consider OHV needs – they're going to need a certain type of recreation/trail experience. IF we're doing a mass change across the planning area, we need to look long range. Also need to check the insatiable appetite and provide parameters to recreation – providing education to public as well. Can't use it until it's gone.

**Note:** changing from Open to limited because we can't sustain cross-country use across the district. Our direction requires that we deal with water, recreation, wildlife, etc. and we still have a lot of area open to roads and some areas with trails. But we are shutting the door to cross country travel and we're changing the use patterns. We won't shut the door to OHV use. And wildlife and recreation users will experience change with this plan. Hopefully, we'll be able to reduce a lot of the conflict that's currently going on.

Trying not to treat any area as a "sacrifice" area.

Brothers La Pine currently provides mechanisms to protect and improves sage grouse habitat. In much of area south of Hwy 20, a lot of changes are taking place w/ seasonal closures, etc. The PA looks like its going to expand sage grouse geographically – we are on the fringe. Now we're developing additional seasonal closures and activity is being pushed into Millican Plateau – smaller area than it ever has been. HE re: fragmentation, roads/trails, etc. need to throw in frequency of use (if not using it much, then does it really impact wildlife? Elk herds are increasing, and we have fragmentation, so model may not be as good. If elk and sage grouse don't live together, then should this model apply here at all. *RESPONSE: litigation puts in closure, although BLP does not. Yes, model does have weaknesses, esp re: frequency of use, but it's only one guideline, not a hard-and-fast rule. We'll use this as part of a slew of tools when we go to on-the-ground planning. Also, demand is for trails that will be used. IF they sit there un-used, then we wouldn't have the demand. That's why we're here – they won't sit empty.*

Has there been thought for what we're managing for out there? Are we balancing by geo area? Or are we shooting for a threshold? Is there "enough" OHV use? *Not even strong user data to know what we currently have. We can get an idea of trend, e.g. increasing use in MP, increasing user dissatisfaction, increasing use in Cline Buttes in winter. Goal has been to disperse use and deal with effects. Not sure if we want to go toward "user days" to manage use. Maybe we'll go there. Limiting factors may be number of trails, access points, capacity, etc. We'll need to develop the system first, then see if we're meeting or exceeding capacity. Right now use is exploding, quads are available for multi-generational riding.*

Re: Cline Buttes and Millican Plateau increasing use. They go there because they can; whether we open NM or not, how are we going to manage use? *That's the question.* How will you patrol and educate? *Another range of area specific planning to ID trails, TH,*

*parking, etc. and then we'll go to development. People will be involved along the way, have a lot of stake in the process and then we'll rely on education, engineering, enforcement, public/private resources, etc. There is education/enforcing going on right now (employees and trained volunteers) – that kind of program would continue. We get ¼ million a year from OHV rider fees and that funding will help with this development. Partnerships to do on the ground work of any recreation type.*

Concern over putting in the number of trail miles – what if that's not the right number?

**Concern over HE of 50-60%** - all models are wrong, but some are useful. If you don't start adding in components to the model, then 50-60 tied just to roads, than if it was lowered w/o considering other variables. Look at HE with more than just roads as variables. Looking at elk, sage grouse, mule deer, and pronghorn...but when we say primarily sage grouse – then it makes it hard to manage for elk. Hard to manage for all together. They have different patch size, forage, etc. needs. Didn't want to apply elk standards here. If sage grouse drive the management, then consider that deer, elk, sage grouse, pronghorn are relatively compatible. Look at more than just roads as part of HE (add in fragmentation, connectivity, forage, cover, distribution/quality, water availability, etc.). Patches would be 100% (1000 acre+). Right now habitat isn't what it could be: forage declines, Juniper impacts → look at landscape w/ respect to soil type/patch size and connectivity and what you need to do to restore these area. Then, if the plan is to do restoration/enhancement, then 50-60 tied to roads is a decrease with a trade-off (of improved other variables).

**Suggested Wording: Across North Millican, maintain primary wildlife emphasis by targeting a moderately high HE for roads (50-60%), and maintaining high quality of other habitat variables ID'd above [frag, connectivity, forage, cover, distribution/quality, water availability, etc.]**

**Discussion:** Opportunity to do more than just reduce roads isn't enough. If habitat is bad, then compromising road numbers lessens restoration goals. HE with all the factors is even lower.

Would also like to maintain seasonal closures until restoration and trail system developed. PA describes interim trail system, says that we'll keep current seasonal closure until new system designed. Restoration not currently tied in. Want restoration tied in as well. Do we have to have all restoration done before we can open up North Millican to use? *Not realistic from time, money, user perspective.* Need to get to the point where we're improving the area for wildlife, and if we're scaling back then we need to scale some up to counter that.

But, 70% HE wasn't a feasible amount to begin with based on existing non-BLM administered road influences.

What about new, year round trail system concurrent w/restoration activities: why would we have to suspend year-round use? Use of motorized vehicles on designated trails

shouldn't impact restoration. If we increase habitat quality, that should raise overall HE. If we have 60-70% HE overall goal.

Concept 4 isn't a good trail system for OHV folks – and where would money come from. You may get money for trails but not restoration. If you tie them together, then you'd have to have money for restoration... Can "concurrent" meet this need? Wouldn't want to put in a trail system and then hope that money for restoration comes somewhere down the line. They should be done together. But we shouldn't limit the development of a transportation system if we can't match dollar for dollar... but if we wait for final HE goal, before allowing people use a trail system...

Main concept is that trail development and restoration work together (integrated).

Still problem with hard and fast numbers – any smart person can manipulate the numbers to say what they want. Goal is ok, maybe have a target, but don't believe you've achieved it if you see a number.

From a model perspective, these numbers are just to define emphasis. Even if we achieve those, we may not agree. Just a kind of mark on a scale that shows us the direction we're going.

What about managing for maximum site potential in wildlife primary emphasis– should be heading toward 100% - for watershed function, landscape health → doing the very best you can given the landscape you're in, while managing (veg) toward target species (species of interest). Means providing for veg, litter, ground cover, that capture and store precipitation that maximizes water for vegetation, not compacted soil, healthy watershed re: soils and vegetation.

But from ODFW perspective would like to maintain or improve current condition for deer, elk, pronghorn, sage grouse in North Millican without trading off one species for another.

How would wildlife modifications affect OHV system? Seems like a designated trail system would meet these?

**Question:** What about monitoring? How do we evaluate whether we've met goals or not? *We would evaluate habitat, not species counts. We'd look at acres improved, acres in a certain amount of habitat quality. What if you improve habitat, but no sage grouse go there? We've still achieved goal – I can't make the grouse go there. ODFW does some counts, so does BLM – but "success" isn't necessarily measured that way. Doesn't mean we don't count or monitor! We don't always know species-specific problems, but we CAN provide better habitat.*

**Question:** If we do habitat modifications to fix sage grouse habitat – will these changes affect elk and deer habitat? *Possibly.*

**PROPOSED CONSENSUS QUESTION:** Can we modify the following guidelines regarding North Millican:

- 50-60% HE
- patch size more variable, with some occurring around 1000 acres, but have some smaller in less effective habitats, and some considerably larger in key habitat areas.
- Seasonal closure of road/trail system to OHV use within areas or along portions of the trail system. Some open year round; portion seasonally closed.
- Avoid locating motorized trails w/in 2-4 miles of any active leks or w/in high value wintering habitat for deer/elk.
- Concentrate year round open trail areas in/near areas of lower value habitats
- Integrate restoration and trail system re-design into the same EA
- Increase current HE.

**[ESTIMATE (not a guideline/limit) 40-80 total trail miles, 30-50 open for winter use.]**

Discussion revealed some problems with the 50-60% Habitat Effectiveness wording.

### **Solutions to Problems with 50-60% HE...**

**Alternate Wording:** Across North Millican, achieve primary wildlife emphasis by targeting a HE for roads of 50-60%, and have concurrent treatment goals to maintain or improve other habitat variables (such as frag, connectivity, forage, cover, distribution/quality, water availability, etc.).

**Discussion:** seems good, but is it worded as plan language? *We'd wordsmith it a bit, but we'd maintain concepts.* Keep above as a concept statement; replace original 50-60%. What does "maintain or improve" mean? *If it's low to begin with, then what if we only improve it a little?* ODFW – really looking for no net loss. USFW would like net improvement of sage grouse.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate wording:** What about managing for maximum site potential in wildlife primary emphasis– should be heading toward 100% - for watershed function, landscape health → doing the very best you can given the landscape you're in, while managing (vegetation) toward target species (species of interest). Means providing for vegetation, litter, gc, that capture and store PPT that maximizes water for vegetation, not compacted soil, healthy watershed re: soils and vegetation. **"Maximize habitat for species of interest in North Millican by managing for optimal watershed function."**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Alternate Wording:** In North Millican, maintain or improve current condition for deer, elk, pronghorn, sage grouse without trading off one species for another. Don't want to move trails out of south to protect sage grouse and move them north into elk, deer pronghorn areas...

**4<sup>th</sup> Alternate Wording:** Improve vegetative habitat for elk, deer, sage grouse and pronghorn.

**5<sup>th</sup> Alternate Wording: Achieve primary wildlife emphasis (70%) by targeting habitat effectiveness for roads of 50-60% and have concurrent treatment goals to improve other habitat variables such as connectivity, forage quality and distribution, cover, water availability, etc.**

**Discussion:** Is this doable? Risk not being able to reach objective with this formulation. Should have high standard

Key concepts captured in the last wording:

Increase factors considered in improving HE

Integrated trail system/vegetation restoration

At least as good, preferably better conditions for wildlife long term over current

Restoration activities will compensate for reduction in HE caused by roads

**Initially NO Consensus: → all votes 5/4/3/1**

**Consensus Decision - Go with principle of: Across North Millican, achieve primary wildlife emphasis by targeting a HE for roads of 50-60%, and have concurrent treatment goals to maintain or improve other habitat variables (such as frag, connectivity, forage, cover, distribution/quality, water availability, etc.). [Word-smithing, specification of habitat variables left to BLM.]**

**Consensus: all votes 2+**

## **Recreation - Trails**

### **Proposed Changes to preferred alternatives**

#### **Greg Currie: summarized public comments on non-motorized use**

- Not enough non-motorized
- Too much locked up for non motorized
- Safety and user experience
- No shared mot/non mot trails
- Sep of mt. bikes/equestrian use
- Designation of free ride areas

Id specific areas for non-motorized use

- NW block
- Dry river Canyon
- Dry canyon (Cline Buttes)

Keep trails out of private land



Private property

**Main Issues**

Shared trails or separate use?

No current direction

**Pref Alt** - ID non-motorized/recreation emphasis areas but no explicit separation of use direction.

**Proposed Changes to Preferred Alternative**

**A.**

1. **Provide direction for shared use as goal, but allow some sep by trail design.**  
**At Area Mgt. Plan level**
2. Identify different trail design/management goals per area (trails designed for specific users but all can use them).

**Discussion**—Lucky to get 1 trail, let alone separate trails for different types of users  
BLM build single trail. User group could build trails for target groups.  
No need to separate trails systems for equestrian.

**Consensus on proposal 1.**

**B. Identification of Trail Locations/amount of trails**

**Existing Preferred:** IDT identified trail systems in Non-motorized and non-motorized emphasis areas

**Brothers La Pine offers no current direction.**

**Pref Alternative Direction**

Density Goals-miles per sq mile for some geographic areas

**Proposed Change to Preferred Alternative :** Use descriptive criteria for function of trail system rather than trail density goals

**Criteria for trails:**

- Provide a range of opportunities/difficulties
- All day use or connections to other trail systems
- Separation of uses/dispersal of trail users
- Winter use
- Avoid conflicts w/private, avoid conflicts w/motorized routes
- Multiple loops
- Take advantage of natural features/interpretive opportunities

Does this meet needs? What needs to be added?

What was reason for density goals? *Wildlife emphasis*

How does separation of use differ from previous issue? *This is issue of distribution of users not focus on user conflicts.*

Is there a model for determining effects of non motorized use on wildlife?  
*Some research done, don't know of any specific models for non-motorized trails.*

Would you design trail to go to lek or avoid a lek? *Avoid, but in more general sense we don't have enough research specific to non-motorized trails to develop specific design criteria to provide for wildlife emphasis in the same way we do motorized trails.*

Do we need direction to avoid conflict w/ wildlife? *Some general direction already in plan, seasonal restrictions associated with raptor nests for example.*

**CONSENSUS DECISION – ADOPT DESCRIPTIVE “Criteria for Trails”  
GUIDELINES PROPOSED**

**Open Public Forum**

Although some members of the public had been present for morning discussion, and had participated when they had questions or comments, none had stayed for open public forum. Alternate Issue Team members were invited to the table.

**Next meetings:**

No meeting on 4/22/04 since topics were completed today. We agreed not to “bump up” topics because people may have made plans based on schedule published on web site and handed out at Issue Team meeting. Cancellations will be posted on web site and e-mailed to Issue Team members. Next meeting on April 27 Crook County library, 1 pm